



GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

**STATEMENT BY THE  
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**HEAD OF DELEGATION**

**GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS**

**4<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Global Environment Facility  
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Madame/Mr. President, thank you for this opportunity to address the Assembly on behalf of the Cook Islands.

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates – we extend to you greetings in our language: **Kia Orana**.

It is the Cook Islands vision to contribute to international efforts to find solutions to global environmental threats through national actions. Such actions however, can only be translated with the financial resources of institutions such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The Cook Islands continues to look to the GEF to improve its effectiveness and efficiency to deliver global environmental benefits in a manner consistent with our national priorities, taking into account the challenges we face as small island developing states in the highly vulnerable Pacific region. We are a tiny country but there is great value in our natural environment and culture that is recognized in our sustainable development plan and in our efforts towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals but also by the number of visitors to our shores.

The programmatic approach advanced by the GEF-PAS (Pacific Alliance for Sustainability) was useful in that GEF recognized that the Pacific region was struggling to access GEF funds (less than 0.1% of GEF funds accessed) and was a novel and pragmatic means to enhance accessibility by Pacific states to more predictable GEF resources. GEF-PAS has unfortunately been slow to deliver, and more national capacity should be built in-country to enhance

a collaborative and effective partnership between Pacific member states, GEF, Implementing agencies, regional organizations and civil society.

The programmatic approach should be encouraged however it should ensure that recipient countries are always in the driver's seat. The introduction of the results-based management framework (RBM) should complement the programmatic approach. Given our limited capacity, the appropriate support and resources should be provided to ensure that institutional mechanisms are in place to ensure its success. The caps on project management allocations within projects have on occasion caused difficulties due to insufficient funds being available for effective delivery. The multi-country approach also assumes harmonization of policies and legislation at the national and regional level, which we are still striving to achieve.

Communication between GEF, Agencies and recipient countries is key to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the GEF. Misunderstandings and distrust have arisen because of insufficient communication. In the Pacific, greater use should be made of the GEF officer based with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to facilitate this role. Enabling qualified national institutions to function as GEF Agencies should further ensure greater ownership and enable transparency.

Despite the ongoing efforts of the GEF CEO in expediting the delivery of funding, the 22-month project cycle needs to have bottlenecks addressed with the view of reducing approval to implementation time.

We wish to congratulate GEF for providing recipient countries with the flexibility in deciding on the programming of resources under the STAR. However, we note that under the GEF Main Trust Fund, through the STAR, there is a heavy concentration on mitigation under its climate change programme. Given our situation where we have relatively little green house gases to mitigate, it is our preference that adaptation be given greater emphasis under the Main Trust Fund as well as by material enhancement of the Special Climate Change Fund.

Up scaling of achievements to ensure longer term effects and impacts can be realized if STAR can deliver implementing activities and not continue to concentrate on funding enabling activities. The Cook Islands has completed a number of reports - its National Capacity Self-Assessment Report (NCSA), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), National Biosafety Framework – we are now ready to implement projects that have tangible results at all levels.

#### *Small Grants Programme*

I wish to provide our support for the proposal that the Small Grants Programme be developed into a fully recognized modality of the GEF. It is an extremely valuable programme as it enables communities at the village level to contribute to caring for their environment.

#### *Funding*

We continue to call for a review of co-financing rules, in particular that they should be waived for Small Island Developing States (SIDs) and least developed countries (LDCs) or at least reduced to ensure that countries can cope financially with meeting this requirement. In our experience we may be able to find co-financing for one project in a strategic area, such as mitigation through energy efficiency, but not for both an energy efficiency project and renewable energy project at the same time as our baseline expenditure is already limited.

Funding to enable Parties to meet their reporting obligations under the five MEAs should be separate from STAR allocation which should go to implementation of activities on the ground in-country. Funds should continue to be provided on a grant basis and not re-directed to lending institutions where we may be required to borrow funds to address environmental problems that are not of our making and the costs of which constrain our development.

In the International Year of Biodiversity, where we look at the 2010 targets, we are pleased to say the Cook Islands have made progress in protected areas, species conservation programmes, and promoting traditional knowledge and practices. Some of this has been achieved thanks to GEF assistance, however funds for implementing national activities are still limited, and our ability to access them constrained. We look forward to working with GEF to ensure the full implementation of projects funded under GEF-3 and GEF-4 even as GEF-5 commences.

We have prioritized sustainable use and management of our natural environment and resources in our National Sustainable Development Plan, and international cooperation is vital to achieving this. Therefore we urge countries that are able to do so to fulfill their pledges not just for the benefit of future generations of Cook Islanders but for the world.

Kia orana e kia manuia